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IN A SHOOT SO HOT, IT'LL SEND SAIF INTO ORBIT

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WITH GLOVES LIKE THAT...

Little Miss Khan could easily make us her punching bag. Here's the cuter Nawab in a bare-all kind of mood...

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Left page: Shorts by Zara, **Jacket** by Adidas, **Bra** by Puma, **Neck piece** by Vero Moda, **Gloves** by Reebok

This page: Pants by Puma, **Sports bra** by Marks & Spencer, **T-shirt** by Zara, **Waist chain** by Aquamarine, **Wristband** by Stylist's own

SOHA ALI KHAN

"You know I am not going to wear a bikini... You've already tried enough," she laughs. So what do you wear on a beach – a sari? "Eeks, no! I am not one of those people who swim in a *salwar kameez*. Of course, I wear a bikini on the beach, but then a lad's magazines can't be trusted," she laughs. We suggest spending some time together listening to Jack Johnson, Cohen and the lot, sipping on a mojito, reading *The Hound of The Baskervilles* and getting to know each other before she does a Bo Derek for us, but she laughs it off.

Little Miss Khan has a hell of a laugh. She also expects you to believe she does not workout – it's just squats and yoga– which seems to have had the most delicious side effect – a derrière you could use as a cast for others. I first ran into Miss Khan in 2005 in Delhi. She was dressed considerably more conservatively and shooting *Rang De Basanti*, I was spending half of my salary on hair gel and working for a tabloid. But that image of her in the green *kurta* and blue jeans has lingered.

Left page: Sports bra by Reebok, **Pants** by Reebok, **Sipper** by Puma

And seven years is a lot to linger. Then of course, there's the heritage – her father was India's cricket captain and a *Nawab*, her mother a woman my father had a crush on and her brother – a man who quite fancies himself as India's answer to James Bond.

"To be honest I'm really bored of people talking only about *Rang De*... I wish people talked about other movies I have done. *Rang De* worked for a lot of reasons other than just me," she says.

And that's the thing about Little Miss Khan. She is upfront to the point of being brutal and then slightly deluded, both in the same breath – she is convinced she has podgy knees, admits she is a little spoilt and used to having her way and at the same time she apologises for it, flirts a little and blames it on her being a princess.

Tragically though, her cinematic career hasn't exactly been a walk in the park – to make matters worse she's had one movie – *Tera Kya Hoga Johnny* that was suddenly shelved and another supernatural thriller with Shiney Ahuja that never finished. She admits she has never seen a horror movie, even though she confesses she has all seasons of *Dexter*, loves *Midsomer Murders* and believes that BBC's show *Sherlock* showing a contemporary, cellphone toting Holmes is a great show. 'How? It's crap,' we protest adamantly. "It's better than the Guy Ritchie movie," she argues. We agree. Ritchie thrives on unpredictability and the one thing you can always count on is Holmes always solving the case. She seems impressed by our argument. Well, she might not be, but then she is an actress.

And just as breezily, she starts talking about her career again. Something about not putting all her eggs in one basket and switching off from a project the minute she is done. Her career though suddenly seems very much back on the fast track – she's landed herself a role in *Midnight's Children* and the sequel to *Saheb, Biwi aur Gangster* (which she's shooting in the plains of Gujarat), and she's just wrapped up shooting for a show for Discovery. "Maybe because I come from a family of achievers, I have seen success and not been enamoured by it." Cinema is

LONG DISTANCE

never works. Every weekend in college someone would be sitting in the dorm with a bottle of vodka nursing a broken heart.

anyway her third profession – she worked at Citibank managing high networth individuals and then Ford Foundation – where she wants to ultimately return to work.

So item songs are out. She seems pretty sure of that. "What does one get from being in the news? It's so much easier to be anonymous," she argues. "Mumbai is a city of frustrated dreams and struggling lives."

That however is not when Soha turns coy – she was the Student Council Treasurer, played in the basketball and baseball teams in school and even cricket till her father banned her from playing it. The girls we know play cricket with tennis balls, want to be bowled an underhand and insist on being bowled out a minimum of five times before giving up the bat. She insists she wasn't one of them. "I played with a proper leather ball," she protests.

Truth is, she was a little bit of a nerd in school. She was the girl sitting at the entrance to her school's dance parties selling tickets and was never ever in the 'bicycle shed'. If you've grown up in Delhi, you'd know her school's bicycle shed has a little bit of a

Shorts by Adidas, **Crop top** by adidas, **Sports bra** by Marks & Spencer, **Shoes** by Stylist's own, **Boxing gloves** by Reebok

reputation (she went to The British School). "Though, I'm pretty sure it was all herbal and nothing massively synthetic," she laughs hinting at the shed's claim to notoriety.

"I still think I was an all-rounder," we remind her she was the one who was sitting outside selling tickets and not inside the party. She blames it on her puppy love for the student council president, a high school romance that never went anywhere. He went to America, she went to UK and they were done two weeks into college. "Long distance never works. Nor do high school romances. Every weekend in college someone would be sitting in the dorm with a bottle of vodka nursing a broken heart."

Since then, of course, she's recovered and is now dating "a young actor called Kunal Khemu." For now though, she's working on her much delayed resolution to learn to boil an egg, and make a pasta or a stir fry with anything other than readymade sauces. And that's the thing about Little Miss Khan, she's very much the sort of girl you can discuss Ramsay horror movies and sip mojitos (as long as you are making them) with. She's also the kind of a girl who'd drive you up a wall because she wants everything done very specifically and more importantly, just her way. She's the girl who'll have you out on the street looking for chocolate chip cookies at 2.30am in your pyjamas and still make you love her for it.

MUMBAI IS A city of frustrated dreams and struggling lives.